2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

absorb the appeals to ancestors. This is only another aspect of their lack of a special 'domain'. And even where *kuci* worship does not lose its independence so completely, it yet has little autonomy; for the kind of supernatural aid it promises can equally be procured by other forms of worship or sacrifice. But of this, too, we shall speak later.

Let me conclude the present account with the brief mention of a further ambiguous practice, a form of sacrifice which stands halfway between an appeal to *Sokó* and the appeal to *kuci*. It is performed by families in which there are or have been twins and is known by that name, *bakomba*. Such houses will possess a special shrine, consisting of a number of small earthenware pots built into the outside wall of a hut, which the women will regularly fill with beer and porridge. Once a year, on the birthday of the twins, the family head will bring a sacrifice of beer and blood of fowl. Now, twins are lucky and a sign of divine benevolence; equally, they represent a special incarnation, a concentration as it were of the 'kinship soul'. In this sacrifice, then, one addresses *Sokó* as well as (an anonymous) *kuci*; and the people who have such a twin shrine will perform all their sacrifices to *kuci* there, and not over the grave of an individual ancestor.

(v) *Spirit Beings*

In the preceding discussion we touched upon certain beliefs in spirits—in 'ancestral spirits', which are an aspect of the personal soul, and in 'ghosts', which are transmutations of the shadow soul. But when the Nupe mention 'spirits' among the things that make up the world they do not mean either of these; they mean immaterial beings which exist in their own right and are not derived from humans, although they have some quasi-human attributes and inhabit the same earth. It is possible that this belief is not an original tenet of Nupe creed; for the Nupe call these spirit beings by a Hausa–Arabic name, *aljénu* (pl. *aljenúži*), and may well have borrowed certain of their aspects from Islam. However this may be, the Nupe do not regard this belief as in any way alien or 'borrowed'. And whether the name for spirits is Nupe or Arabic, it is a name, sharply distinguishing this class of beings from all others.

Though circumstantial and readily expressed, the spirit beliefs are fluid and far from uniform. The most varied opinions will not be thought unorthodox, but will be taken as evidence for the multifariousness of the spirit world. A first group of spirits, vaguely anthropomorphous but without distinct individualities, is said to inhabit the inanimate parts of nature, hills, trees, watercourses, the bush, and so forth. These spirits have sex, and according to

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

fessional divination in some measure duplicate one another. If this means that the diviner has no monopoly of prophecy, it equally means that one need not be very seriously concerned over one's dreams, since the message they might hold would also transpire in some other way. Normally, in fact, the people are not inclined to take their dreams very seriously, even in the localities where there are experts versed in that lore. I used to record all the dreams of the Nupe men with whom I was in daily contact; though they were quite often puzzled about their dreams, they performed sacrifices and so forth only when their dreams referred to dead relatives. Dream interpretation, then, represents another 'supererogatory' element in Nupe religious thought, another 'additional' notion about the meaning of the things in the world, and now one conspicuously treated as such.

Let me add that in other respects, too, the diviner holds no monopoly of prophecy. If he pronounces upon lucky or unlucky days, some knowledge of this kind is common throughout Nupe. Thus two months, the seventh and thirteenth, are held to be unlucky, and people will avoid travelling or having wedding feasts and other celebrations at these times. In all other months certain days are specially lucky—the second, seventh, twelfth, seventeenth and eighteenth day; so is the time of full moon, while moonless days are unlucky and dangerous for all tasks.[1]

If divination and the interpretation of dreams represent supernatural aids which overlap in their efficacy but are of different ease of access, this is true also of the knowledge, shared by everybody, of propitious and unpropitious dates. In other words, for much the same kind of guidance you can rely on your own knowledge, on what you or your friends know about dreams, and on the professional advice of diviners. Once more we note the 'proliferation' of Nupe religious thought and that tendency to multiply the mystic tools, that is, to have 'several strings to one's bow.'

[1] It is usual in Nupe to refer to months and days in this way, by numbers rather than names. The interval of five between the lucky days, incidentally, plays no further part in Nupe thought or religious observances.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

4. SOLEMNIZATIONS

We now turn to ceremonials which do not stand on their own, as so many efforts to wield supernatural power for particular ends, but which surround or merge with certain critical mundane events, birth, death, and marriage. For the Nupe, these ceremonials do not represent *kuti*, rituals proper: they do not move the force that is in the universe; nor do they belong to the tools which God granted man for this purpose. The ceremonials of birth, death, or marriage are merely observances, customary ways of dealing with the events in question or, as the Nupe say, 'ways of doing things'. If we call them 'rituals' or 'rites', we are applying our own nomenclature for such procedures. Even so, these 'ways of doing things' involve appeals to God and some link with the whole system of religious ideas; that is, they are *solemnizations* of mundane acts.

(i) *Birth*

The observances bearing on childbirth begin already with conception and culminate, some time after the actual birth, in the naming ceremonial, so that the event of birth is treated, not as a climax, but as one in a series of events or stages. This concern with pre- and post-natal phases corresponds closely to the Nupe conceptions of life and of body and soul; several of the respective observances, however, are neither specifically 'religious' nor explicitly fitted into the 'natural philosophy' of the people, belonging rather to the more indefinite range of notions we commonly call superstitions.

Thus the most auspicious time for conception is laid down, in typical Nupe manner, by numbering the day in question, which should be the fifth after the mother's menses. The night should be young, for a child conceived in the dark of the night, when spirits and witches are abroad, might easily be born misshapen. As soon as the pregnancy is noticeable (in the third month, as the Nupe calculate, or at the latest in the fifth), the parents must discontinue sexual relations; the mother must avoid places inhabited by spirits as well as certain kinds of food which might harm the child: honey would give it adenoids, and a certain fish cause it to have six fingers on one hand. I have already mentioned that the avoidance of cohabitation continues for about three years after the birth of the child, since a new conception and pregnancy might stop the growth of the infant. In addition to these general rules and avoidances, which everyone knows, there may be special ones, ordered by the diviner, whom the expectant father will at once consult.